

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

MCT-01 ACDA-07 DHA-02 SY-05 USSS-00 /085 W

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R 232123Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1524

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 9339

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, PINT, CI, US

SUBJECT: LETELIER BOMBING: CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT,
FIRST REACTIONS

REF: SANTIAGO 9225

1. SUMMARY: CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ISSUED ANOTHER STATEMENT ON THE LETELIER BOMBING SEPT. 22. IT CHASTIZED THOSE ABROAD WHO BLAME THE GOC FOR THE ATTACK AND SEEKS TO PUT THE MATTER IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF A LONG SERIES OF "COLDLY AND CRUELLY PLANNED" ACTS BY FANATICS DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT THE GOC. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ATTACK HAS BEEN VOLUMINOUS BASED PRINCIPALLY ON INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICE STORIES INCLUDING "WASHINGTON POST" AND "NYT" EDITORIALS. LOCAL EDITORIALS SO FAR HAVE PICKED UP THE OFFICIAL LINE THAT THE GOC HAS THE MOST TO LOSE BY SUCH INCIDENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ITS RELEASE, FOREIGN MINISTRY STATES THAT VARIOUS SECTORS OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION CONDEMNED THE GOC FOR THE KILLINGS EVEN BEFORE LEARNING THE FACTS. THE MINISTRY SEES A PATTERN, IN THE ATTACKS ON GEM, PRATS (9/74), THE LEIGHTONS (10/75) AND LETELIER, ALL OF WHICH OCCURRED DURING UN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES. THUS THEY MUST BE PART OF A PLANNED CAMPAIGN BY "INSTIGATORS OF HATE, IMBUED WITH SAVAGE FANATICISM."

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3. LOCAL MEDIA HAVE COVERED THE STROY EXTENSIVELY; IT BLANKETED

FRONT PAGES ON THE 21ST. MOST ACCOUNTS PERFORCE HAVE COME FROM THE WIRE SERVICES. THEY SEEM TO HAVE BEEN FULLY REPRINTED -- EVEN SUCH CRITICAL ITEMS AS THE "WASHINGTON POSTQTS" EDITORIAL. STATEMENTS BY GOC OFFICIALS HAVE, OF COURSE, BEEN PLAYED UP. "EL MERCURIO'S" LEADING EDITORIAL SEPTEMBER 22 TYPIFIES THE BASICALLY DEFENSIVE NATION OF LOCAL COMMENTARY. "MERCURIO" SAYS TERRORISM IS ALIEN TO THE CHILEAN TRADITION, NOTES THE COINCIDENCE OF THESE INTERNATIONAL ATTACKS WITH ANNUAL SESSIONS OF THE UNGA, AND POINTS OUT THAT THEY DAMAGE THE GOC, CONCLUDING: " THEREFORE IT IS ABSURD TO SUPPOSE THAT PEOPLE CONNECTED WITH OUR GOVERNMENT EVEN MIGHT HAVE HINTED AT UNDERTAKING SUCH CRIMES."

4. REACTION FROM OFFICIALS HAS FOLLOWED THE FOREGOING LINES. AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION, A NUMBER OF CHILEAN OFFICERS OF ALL SERVICES WERE GENUINELY SHOCKED THE EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 21. THEY SAID STRONGLY THAT THE GOC WOULD NEVER HAVE CONSIDERED SUCH AN ACTION, BUT THAT LETELIER WAS A DESERVING TARGET IF SOMEONE HAD TO GET IT. THEY EXPRESSED AMAZEMENT THAT WORLD OPINION ASCRIBED A GLOBE-GIRDLING REACH TO THE CHILEAN SECURITY SERVICE OPERATIONS, AND THEN MUSED THAT PERHAPS SUCH CONCERNS, EVEN THOUGH UNFOUNDED, MIGHT HAVE A DETERRENT EFFECT ON CHILEAN EXILE GROUPS.

5. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF FOREIGN MINISTRY SEPTEMBER 22 STATEMENT:

"AS A RESULT OF THE TERRORIST ATTACK WHICH KILLED ORLANDO LETELIER, VARIOUS SECTORS OF WORLD PUBLIC OPINION HAVE ISSUED CONDEMNATORY JUDGMENTS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF CHILE. FOR THIS REASON IT IS NECESSARY TO EMPHASIZE THE FACTS, SO THAT CITIZENS CAN COMPARE THE CONTEXT OF EVENTS WITH THE REALITY AND MAGNITUDE OF THE RABBLEROUSING AGGRESSION DIRECTED AGAINST US.

"1) AS SOON AS VARIOUS PERSONAGES HEARD ABOUT THE INCIDENT, EVEN BEFORE LEARNING THE DETAILS OF THIS LAMENTABLE AND DESPICABLE ACT OF TERRORISM, THEY DID NOT HESITATE TO BLAME THE GOVERNMENT OF CHILE. THEY DEMONSTRATED AN IRRESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE UNBECOMING TO THEIR ROLES. AT THE SAME TIME, VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE REDOUBLED THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPOSE MEASURES DESIGNED TO BOYCOTT THE COUNTRY.

"2) FOR ANY NORMAL PERSON IT IS PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT THE INCIDENT CAN ONLY DAMAGE THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT, SINCE IT WILL
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BE RAPIDLY INCORPORATED INTO THE PROPAGANDE CAMPAIGN AGAINST US RUN BY THE SOVIET UNION.

"TO ATTRIBUTE TO THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT SUCH A CRIMINAL AVT, AS SOME HAVE DONE, IS EVEN MORE UNJUSTIFIED IF WE CONSIDER THAT MR. LETELIER WAS DETAINED IN CHILE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1974 AND LEFT THE COUNTRY WITH THE EXPRESS AUTHORIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

"3) SO THAT PUBLIC OPINION MAY JUDGE FOR ITSELF, IT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SOME ANTECEDENTS, THE MERE MENTION OF WHICH WILL

HELP CLARIFY MATTERS:

"A) THE ATTACK OCCURRED ON THE VERY DAY THE THIRTY-FIRST UNGA OPENED;

"B) THE ATTACK OCCURRED IN THE COUNTRY WHERE THE UN IS HEADQUARTERED;

"3) THE ATTACK AGAINST MR. SIC CARLOS PRATS AND HIS WIFE TOOK PLACE SEPTEMBER 30, 1974, ALSO DURING THE UNGA;

"D) THE ATTACK AGAINST MR. BERNARDO LEIGHTON AND HIS WIFE OCCURRED OCTOBER 6, 1975, ALSO DURING THE UNGA AND INDEED ON THE SAME DAY THAT OUR FOREIGN MINISTER SPOKE BEFORE IT;

"E) THE PERSON CHOSEN AS VICTIM WAS WIDELY KNOWN; AND

"F) THE ATTACK TOOK PLACE NEAR THE CHILEAN EMBASSY.

"4) UNDOUBTEDLY, THE FOREGOING FACTS ARE MORE THAN COINCIDENTAL -- THEY REFLECT COLD AND CUREL PLANNING, OF A TYPE ONLY INSTIGATORS OF HATE, IMBUED WITH SAVAGE FANATICISM, COULD CARRY ON.

"5) THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A CONSISTENT AND OPEN STANCE AGAINST TERRORISM. IT NOT ONLY REPUDIATES IT BUT HAS FOUGHT IT WITH FIRM COMMITMENT. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ASKED FORMALLY FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO UNDERTAKE A COMPLETE, DETAILED INVESTIGATION TO CLARIFY ALL THE FACTS INVOLVED IN THIS REGRETTABLE TERRORIST ACTION.

"6) THIS ATTACK SEEMS TO JUSTIFY THE ATTITUDE TAKEN BY THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT, AND VARIOUS OTHER FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS, IN SEEKING TO OBTAIN FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY A CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM AND IN ADOPTING MEASURES TO CONTAIN AND PUNISH IT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MURDER, BOMBING, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SANTIA09339
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760360-0105
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760928/aaaaaxhu.tel
Line Count: 141
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 SANTIAGO 9225
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <25 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LETELIER BOMBING: CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT, FIRST REACTIONS
TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, PINT, CI, US, (LETELIER, ORLANDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006